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HUMANE LIFE  
DISPLAYED  
In A  
SERMON  
On  
The first SUNDAY  
Of this  
NEW YEAR.  
MDCCVI.

By JOHN COCKBURN D.D.  
K

L O N D O N.

Printed for *Thomas Bennet*, at the Half Moon in  
St. Pauls Church-Yard, and *George Strahan*,  
at the Golden Ball against the Royal-Exchange  
in Cornhill.

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**To the Right Reverend**  
**FATHER in GOD,**  
**HENRY**  
**LORD BISHOP**  
**OF**  
**LONDON.**

**May it Please Your LORDSHIP,**

**C**ustoms are Laws, and Ancient Universal Custom making it a Duty in the Beginning of the Year to salute Benefactors and Friends with respectful good Wishes, I should be very ungrateful, if

\*

I

## The Dedication.

*I declined this or any other occasion of testifying the Honour and Respect due to your Lordship from all, but particularly from myself who have had so many Expressions of your Lordships Favour.*

*If Wishes were as effectual as they are hearty, your Lordship would have by mine many Years yet to come, and all of them blessed with all Happiness. But I know that your Lordship aspires after a better Life, as you have a sure Ground of Hope; for God will remember all Good Deeds, and has passed his Word that He will crown with Immortal Glory, those who are full of Compassion and Good Works.*

*Gifts are usual at this time as well as Wishes: But Every one is not capable of offering suitably to the Persons Quality and Merit. In that case, Affection and Good Will must be chiefly considered. 'Tis only on this account that I can plead Acceptance of my humble Present of the Description of Humane Life. Indeed the Subject is important, and worthy to be offered unto any:  
and*

## The Dedication.

and so should this Performance, if there had been Art and Skill to answer our Desire; for I can say that all the strokes here, proceeded from a deep Sense and thorough Conviction of the Truth intended to be expressed.

I have known ill drawn Pictures serve to refresh the Memory of the Original in those who had been well acquainted with It. For as often as they looked on the Defective piece, they remembred the Features and Advantages which were wanting, as well as those which were express'd. I can promise your Lordship no other Pleasure and Satisfaction by looking upon this rude Draught of Humane Life.

Knowing the frailty and uncertainty of Life I was not willing to lose an Opportunity of owning before all the World my great Obligations to your Lordship, as for divers personal Favours, so more especially for the Encouragement which your Lordship has given and procured to those Undertakings to which Divine Providence called me. An



## The Dedication.

*Humble Acknowledgement with Prayers to  
God for a Recompence is all the Grateful  
Return in my Power. And as it is Just  
to do this, so when ever any other Occasion  
offers, I shall be ready to shew my self to  
the utmost,*

**My Lord,**

**Your LORDSHIPS,**

**Most humble, most obedient,  
most dutiful, and most af-  
fectionate Servant**

**J. COCKBURN.**



**H U.**

# HUMANE LIFE

## DISPLAYED.

Ps. XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our days, that we  
may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

**T**his Psalm begins the fourth Book of Psalms according to the Hebrew Division. It is ascribed to Moses, and there is the same Reason for believing it his, as that those are Davids which bear his name. That it might be understood of the first and great Moses, it is added *the Man of God*, which both distinguisheth him from others of that name, and also shews how much he is to be honoured. Moses being the penman of this Psalm, therefore it is very ancient, far older than any Hymn or song of Humane Composition now extant, as it far excells all of them in matter, in Metaphors, and sublime expressions. On what occasion it was penned is not declared; some guess it to have been in

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the Wilderness when the people murmured and were plagued for their murmuring and Rebellion. Some Expressions in the Psalm do insinuate it.

In the former part of the Psalm, the Preservation of Mankind in their several Generations is ascribed to God, and his Supreme Authority over man is acknowledged, by virtue of which it is declared that he has appointed unto Man a short and laborious Life, for a Punishment of his Sins. From this verse to the close, there are Prayers and addresses to God, suitable to the miserable State and Circumstances of Man in this world.

This Text is the first of these Prayers, and it contains a Petition with the Reason of it, or End for asking it. I Intend to speak to both, as being proper Meditations to the beginning of a New Year.

## FIRST PART.

The Petition is in these words, *so teach us to number our days.* Some render it, *teach us to number our days aright.* Others *to number our days after this manner.* The sense is the same. To number in Scripture is not always to take the simple





simple Sum of a thing, but to weigh, ponder, and seriously consider the nature, quality, effects and consequences of it. So Ps. XLVIII. 13. you have it *consider her palaces*, but in the Hebrew it is *number her palaces*. So when God is said to *number or count our steps*, as Job XIV. 16. XXXI. 4. the meaning is that He observes them whether they be right, as it is explain'd Ch. XXXIV. 21. and when Job saith, *I would declare unto him the number of my steps*, by the Context it is clear that he means, He would appeal to God himself for the uprightness of his steps or actions. Ch. XXXI. 37. So then to *number our days* is to take an account of the nature of them and to consider the consequences of them; as by *Days* we are to understand *years* or the *term of Life* in this world. *To number our Days* is not to tell the Day on which we were born, nor to reckon how many have passed since: but it is to observe with all due consideration the Life or state of Man in this world, with respect both to its present Condition, and to that which doth necessarily follow it. All which may be summed up into five particulars. *Viz*: I. The Brevity of Life.

II. The commonly abrupt and uncertain Conclusion of it. III. Its Vanity. IV. Its Vexation and Misery. V. That it is succeeded by an Eternal State of felicity or misery.

I. *To number our Days* is to take into consideration the Brevity of Life. This the Psalmist had in his view as v. 10. where he says, *the Days of our years are threescore years and ten, or if by Reason of strength they be fourscore.* That is, this is now the longest Period which commonly men live. Some single Instances there are of men who have stepped beyond it, and even considerably too. Moses himself who penned this Psalm *was an hundred and twenty years old,* neither did He die then thro any decay of Nature, for it is said of him that *his Eye was not dim nor his natural force abated.* Deut. XXXIV. 7. And as before Moses, Divers lived several hundred years, so since some have doubled and trebled, yea near quadrupled the Term of years set to the common Life of Man in this Psalm. A Credible Authour tells of an Indian who was above 300. Most German Historians report of the Armour-bearer\* to *Charles the Great*, that he reached

sr. Walt.  
Rawleigh.  
\* Called  
Joannes a  
Stampis  
or de Tem-  
poribus

ched 361. In our fathers days there was *a Parre*, and in our own *a Jenkins*, Vid. Philos. Transact. June 1696. the first exceeded by some months 152. as did the other 169. There are such Instances still alive in our own and almost every other Country, as they may be read in most Histories and Travels.

So that the Psalmist does not intend to fix the limits of every single mans Life, but only to declare what is commonly determined concerning Mankind in general. As it cannot be concluded from his words that every one should attain to 80 or 70, so neither must it be inferred that none can go beyond these years. It is here as in other Natural Courses, which are so called because ordinary, they prescribe to the Generality, but do not exclude Extraordinary Cases: they are Laws and ordinances to which the Creature is subjected, but the Almighty Creatour is above them, and like an absolute Sovereign has the power of dispensing with them at his pleasure. God gives these Instances of a long Life, to shew that the common Brevity of Life is not determined by any Law of Nature, neither does it proceed from any defect in natural Causes, but from the wise and arbitrary



trary Decree of God. If he pleased, he could give strength and vigour to hold out not only till fourscore, but to fourscorethousands, yea for ever. The same Sun which was created at first continues, it retains its heat and brightness, and does now as much as in the beginning *go forth like a Bridegroom out of his Chamber, and rejoiceth as a Giant to run his course.* And yet it is unconceivable how such an Immense Body can be continued in so rapid a motion without splintring into pieces. So the will of God could have continued the first Man till this present time. He that resisted the Injuries of the weather, the Change of seasons, and the Inconveniencies of labour for 930 years could have done it to the End of the World by the same means, if it had pleased God. They who say otherwise *do err not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God.* As They also do who deny Immortality to have been annexed to the state of Innocency, or that Death is the fruit of sin.

Man had been Immortal if he had not sinned: but Sin brought Death according to that peremptory threatening. *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

*die.* That is, from thenceforth thou art condemned and liable to Death, and shalt sooner or later return to the Dust. The sentence is Irrevocable, and has passed upon all men: for all have sinned, and so *It is appointed unto all to die once.* No Immunity from Death can be expected, but God grants a Reprival for more or fewer years as it seems good unto Him.

In the beginning, the Execution of this sentence of Death due to sin, was delayed for several hundreds of years, because this was necessary for peopling the World, improving Arts and Sciences, perfecting Observations, and learning true Wisdom and Knowledge. But these first Reasons ceasing, ever since the Term of Life or more properly the Reprival from Death has been shortned. Mans Life was longest before the Flood, yet even then t'was never prolonged to a thousand years; for *Adam* lacked 70 and *Methuselah* 31, which no doubt includes some Mystery, but which as yet we cannot know, because Revelation doth not teach it, and without the light of Revelation all conjectures are vain and presumptuous. After the Flood a Lease of Life was granted for one two and three

hundred years till the World was sufficiently stocked with people, Nations form'd, and a good foundation laid for all Knowledge necessary to this and the other World. Then the Life of Man was considerably abridged, and in Moses his time t'was fix'd to threescore and ten, and to fourscore, as it has continued so to this day. They are much mistaken who think that the Life of Man has been continually decreasing : It has been at a stand ever since the days of Moses at least ; for as by this Psalm it appears that then 70 and 80 were the common periods of the longest Life, so it is now ; for tho many drop short of these years, yet we do not reckon 70 or 80 rare and singular Instances.

But tho Seventy and Eighty be not uncommon, yet it is short, even very short. It is short of the Lives of the *Antediluvian Patriarchs* and of those who immediately succeeded Noah's Flood. It is short of the Time allowed to divers other Creatures. An Oak stands twice as long, and sends forth Leaves every spring. The Hind and Roebuck do commonly run it out an hundred. So the Crows, the Ravens, and the Eagles are ob-



observed to reach far beyond these years. How short is this Life of Man to the Duration of the Sun and other Heavenly Bodies, which after 5700. and odd years do still shine gloriously! and what are all our years in comparison to Eternity which is Incommensurable? In this respect *our age is as nothing*. There are some little Animals or Insects, as the Roman Philosopher as well as Orator observes from *Tuscul. Quest. l. 1.* Aristotle, which never live above a day; they are hatch'd in the morning and they die by night: Eight hours make them old, and Decrepit age comes on at sunset, and yet their short Life of a Day bears a greater proportion to ours, than ours to Eternity, as that person justly reasons. Men are old only in respect of Infants and Children, but the oldest have lived but a little while with respect either to Time absolutely considered or to Eternity. All love Life, and every one would see many Days: but none can have their desire, for few Days are determined to all.

Both Orators and Poets have exerted their Wits and fancies, to find out quaint Expressions and lively Images, to represent this brevity of Humane Life.

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But nothing can be more Expressive and Emphatical, than that which is said in Scripture. *My days, saith Job, are swifter than a weavers shuttle.* Yet in the twinkling of an Eye it passeth from one hand to the other. Again he saith, *O remember that my Life is wind.* Ch. VII. 6, 7. *Behold, saith David, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee, verily Every Man at his best state is altogether vanity.* Because as he saith elsewhere, *his days are as a shadow that passeth away.* Ps. XXXIX. 5. CXLIV. 4. What is your Life? S<sup>t</sup>. James asks and answers, *It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* Jam. IV. 14. And here Moses shews Man as Grass; *In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up, in the Evening it is cut down and withereth. We spend our years as a Tale that is told.* The Life of Man is but a short Tale and soon told; It cannot hold out the diversion of a Winters night. Fourscore years to come seem something, but when they are past they look like yesterday and a watch in the night. Men are astonish'd to see how soon the Months run out, and the  
Years

Years are ended, and how the Seasons return before we are aware of them. He that has lived 70 or 80 years can repeat his Life in a few words, and run over the whole Transactions of it in an Hour. And if fourscore Years be a small Sum, how inconsiderable is ten, twenty, thirty, forty which is the most that many can reckon? It is with great struggling that any bears out till fourscore: for one who sees these Years, there are a hundred that have the Thread of their Life cut much sooner; as the Life of many by 50 or 60 is a meer burden, and a shadow of Death it self: for then *the Sun, the Light, the Moon, the Stars* begin to be darkned; *the Keepers of the house tremble, the Strong men bow themselves, the Grinders cease and are few, and those that look out of the Windows are darkned*, as Solomon elegantly expresses it.

II. A second thing to be considered, when we *number our days*, is the commonly abrupt and uncertain Conclusion of them. Life at the best is very short, and commonly it ends abruptly, so that the Death of the most is sudden, and a meer surprise to themselves and others.



others. *It is soon cut off and we flee away.*

Some have been forewarned of the time of their Departure. Moses knew both the day and place where he was to die. And as such things are written and told, so some Instances are not to be denyed, because they are sufficiently attested. But such particular Warnings of departing this life are not to be hoped, nor are they frequent, nay they are very rare. They are peculiar favours reserved to a Few. Commonly the day, the hour, and the manner of ones death are hid, nor are there Rules for even probable Conjectures. It may be reckoned pretty near when a woman should be delivered. But there are no natural means for a certain calculation of ones Death, neither as to Time nor Manner. Astrology is a meer Delusion, and as it is unlawful to consult it, so they who have done it or taken other methods to know their Fate, have been deceived and altogether as much disappointed as others, by misunderstanding the answers return'd and by wrong applying them. The Decree that all must die is revealed and confirmed by daily Experience: but when or how

how it is to be executed on particular persons is a secret not to be pry'd into. The attempt is presumptuous, neither has it yielded much comfort and satisfaction to them who had the curiosity to try it.

There is an appointed Time to every Man, but the Knowledge of it is above our Reach. All may be assured that they shall be changed, but when or after what manner is in vain to search. Who knows in what year of his Life he shall die? whether in Summer or Winter, by day or in the night? Death like a Thief keeps no certain Hour, but steals un-awares and by surprise. Some ly down in health and make appointments for the Morning, but never awake to keep them. Others go out in strength and vigour with full purpose of returning Home, but are arrested by the way and Instantly carried to the other World. As some perish by Hunger, so the Life of others evaporates while they are a feeding it, and sitting before a full Table making merry with friends. The Danger of Death is only visible at Sea and in Battles, yet many escape these, while others are seized in their shops, in their Houses, in their Walks, and in their Gardens of pleasure, when Death  
was

was least in their thoughts. Nothing is so frail as the Life of Man, like Glass it is broken by rough handling; and it is also stifled by over careful keeping. Death often makes his way by Sicknes, but not always: for oftentimes many in Health go to the Grave before them who are lying on Sickbed. Nor can the ablest Physician presage certainly the Event by the first approaches of Sicknes; for that which begins with Violence sometimes ends in a lingring Distemper, as that which at first is little regarded frequently proves Mortal. Thus then as the Life of Man here is short, so it ends for the most part abruptly and suddenly; so that commonly all die a sudden Death, all do who are not so wise as, with Job, to *wait all the days of their appointed time, till that last change come.*

III. Thirdly to *number our days* is to weigh the Vanity of them, that is, how much of them is unavoidably consumed in matters which amount to nothing. That is vain which is useless, and more than a half of Life is spent without any Profit, without doing much to forward the great End of life. The longest Period is fourscore, and the first two we are in swadling clouts.



clouds. It takes three more to learn to go, and we are at ten before we can put on our own cloths. Birds are full grown to flie in a month. A Lamb instantly after it is brought forth frisks about the field, and most beasts and animals come very soon to the perfection of their kind. But one fourth of this Term of Life set by the Psalmist goes away, before we attain to any competent degrees of Sense, Reason and Discretion, or are able to make any tolerable shift for the good either of Body or Soul. Our Infancy and Childhood is a State of Ignorance, our Youth is misled by Errour, prejudices and false notions. And when arriv'd at mans state, let us be never so frugal more than one Third of our time is spent in Eating, Drinking, and Sleeping. There is a good deal besides complimented away in giving and receiving visits, and in other accidental Rencounters, which may be called the Impertinencies of life, and yet they are unavoidable; unless one would turn surly and morose, which is to rectify one Evil with a greater; for a morose surly unfociable Temper is vicious, It makes one uneasy to himself and to others about him, nor is He capable  
of

of doing good so much as a sociable person. Indeed Eating , Drinking , and Sleeping are slavish Incumbrances to a thinking reasonable Soul of vast designs: But the Laws of God and Nature require them , and therefore there ought to be no complaining of the Servitude. Nor must we obstinately resist what universal Custom has imposed if innocent , tho in the nice balance of serious Wisdom it be found Light and an impertinent Clog to the great End we should pursue. There is a time to be serious , and a time to trifle ; for Laughing is trifling , and Solomon assigns a time for it. It is impossible to be always employed about the best Things: Way must be given sometimes to other things which in themselves are of no Consequence. Children must be played with , and there must be a Condescendence to those whose Conversation cannot much profit us. Nor will the quitting all Company and Fellowship with others free us of Vanity and Impertinency ; for Folly is inseparable from us , and our own Minds are ready of themselves to start vain thoughts. We dream in the night , and we often in the day time Imagine vain things. They  
are

are accounted Bedlamites who rattle out all their foolish and incoherent Thoughts and Fancies: but the sound and sober do only conceal them; for if they be Ingenuous they must confess that their Thoughts are often as little to the purpose. Important things do not fix our Spirits, they flagg, waver and look about whatever be our Resolution, and how much so ever it is our Interest to go on with the serious Exercice. Few or none have strength to hold out a constant Solitude or long Retirement, but even there will find and must yield to as many foolish and impertinent Interruptions to our great Business, as when we converse in the World.

Such is our Ignorance, such is our Weakness, such is the Constitution of this World, and such are our Engagements in it, that a great part of our short Life is consumed in Idleness, in Vanity, in matters that are trifling and to little purpose. What are most of the Employments of this World? What do they signify to true Happiness or that Eternal Interest which all should aim at? what is the Perfection to be boasted of by the Study and Practice of many Arts and

B                      Sciences!



Sciences! How mean are they to take up the thoughts of an Immortal Soul? How trifling in comparison of those high and sublime Matters our Nature is capable of! and yet both Necessity and Duty oblige to mind them. Thus it appears that our few Days are full of Vanity.

IV. Fourthly when we *number our days*, we ought to take an account of their Vexation and Misery. This the Psalmist had in his view, as appears from v. 7. and 8. *We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our Iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.* And how could He but reflect on the Vexation and Misery of Humane Life, of which He himself had so great Experience? Moses was born under the most Tyrannical Government of *Pharaoh*, who had ordained all the Male Children of the Israelites to be killed as soon as born: his Parents hid him three Months, but dared not to do it longer for fear of their own Lives, and so they exposed him. He was saved by Pharaoh's Daughter, who brought him up delicately till mans Estate: but afterwards he was forced to run *Egypt*, and to flee to *Midian*, where  
he

he kept Jethro's sheep forty Years for bread and shelter. Act. VII. 30. After that God had honoured him above all men, what Vexation was given him by his own People whose Deliverance and Welfare he sought? How often did they teaze him by their Murmuring and unreasonable Complaints? There never was a juster, a more disinterested, a more publick Spirited Person, and yet many a time they rebelled against him, and threw base Reproaches upon him: if he had not been the meekest Man upon Earth, his Spirit would have been broken, nor could he have held out such frequent ill Usage. When Jacob gave an account of his Life to Pharoah, 't was thus, *the days of the Years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty Years, few and evil have the days of the Years of my Life been, and have not attained unto the days of the Years of the Life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.* Gen. XLVII. 9. Troubles followed so hard on David, that to mention the one is to remember the other, wherefore it is said *Remember David and all his troubles.* Ps. CXXXII. 1.

But there is no need of producing par-

ticular instances to prove that, of which  
 all Mankind are or may be sensible. There  
 is no Exception from this General. *Man,*  
*saith Eliphaz, is born unto troubles as the*  
*sparks flie upward.* Job V. 7. Job con-  
 tradicted him in other matters, yet he  
 neither would nor could in this; but con-  
 fesseth also *that Man that is born of a*  
*woman is of few days and full of trouble.*  
*He cometh forth like a flower, and is*  
*cut down, he flieth also as a shadow and*  
*continueth not.* Ch. XIV. 1. What Da-  
 vid saith of the wonderful works of God  
 and his thoughts to us ward, may be  
 applied to the Troubles of Mankind, *they*  
*are many, they cannot be reckon'd up in*  
*order, if I would declare and speak of*  
*them, they are more than can be numbred.*  
 Ps. XL. 5. They are so numerous, and  
 do so crowd upon us on all Sides, that  
 one knoweth not where to begin, or  
 how to end, or after what manner to  
 range them. Our Life begins with crying,  
 and every Day there is one or other oc-  
 casion of Weeping and Lamenting. In the  
 Winter we quake with Cold, in the Sum-  
 mer we faint with Heat, and all the days  
 of our short Life we *eat our bread in the*  
*sweat of our brows.* Our Infancy and  
 Child-



Childhood are loaded with Diseases, because then we cannot be sensible of other Troubles ; and when grown up we are tryed with Hardships and Difficulties, with Fastings and Watchings and other severe Exercices; we are exposed to perils by Land and dangers by Sea; we are forced to wrestle with Violence and Oppression, and to encounter Malice and Reproach which pierce our Spirits. All our Hopes are mixed with Fears, and often when they seem full ripe are blasted ; so that while we are expecting Joy and Satisfaction , the unwelcome guests of Sorrow and Affliction do appear. If our Wishes come to Enjoyment, the Pleasure is short of what was promised , and some other thing happens which Sowrs it. When our Desires are denied, our Countenance is cast down , and very often the granting them gives more Grief. What is best for us is dubious, and our own fond Choice proves frequently a Mischeif, and a Train of misfortunes. No Blessing comes without a Cross , nor is there any Comfort which has not some Grief attending it. If we are poor we are depised, and when we thrive and prosper Malice lays open our real Faults , and Calumny adds to

them. Dirt is thrown upon our Just and  
 generous Intentions, and our good Deeds  
 are misinterpreted. The Sincerity of our  
 Repentance is questioned, and if once  
 Evil or Foolish we are always suspected.  
 When we sow good Seed, Tares grow  
 up, and Briars and Thorns arise with our  
 pleasant and profitable Plants. The Coun-  
 try lyes open to the Disasters of Wind  
 and Weather, Storms and Tempests,  
 nor can the best Walled or best Govern'd  
 City keep out either publick Calamities  
 or private Afflictions: there are most  
 Complaints where are greatest Crowds of  
 People. A Single Life is Melancholy and  
 wearisom, and a Married State is full of  
 cares and frequently interrupted with  
 Disgusts. A Private Condition is not ho-  
 noured, and Publick Offices are a Drud-  
 gery for others seldom thank fully requi-  
 ted and often persecuted by Envy. Stand  
 at a Cottage door, there shall be heard the  
 noise of Vexation and Quarrelling: and  
 tho the sumptuous Outside of Palaces  
 may make one think that Trouble and  
 Sorrow come not near them, yet enter  
 them and you shall find not only the  
 Servants clamouring about their ill usage,  
 but the very Masters and Mistresses de-  
 jected,

jected, their Countenance cast down, either unable to eat their Bread or refusing it by the Discontent of their Minds, and the Vexation of the evils which have befallen them. For as the *son of Sirach* saith, *great Travel is created for every Man, and an heavy Yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mothers womb, till the day that they return to the mother of all things; from him that sitteth on a throne of glory unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes; from him that weareth purple and a Crown unto him that is clothed with a linnen frock.* Ecclus. XL. 1. No Art can prevent Troubles, no Merit can procure a Dispensation from them. *The wicked Man travelleth with pain all his days,* according to *Eliphaz.* Job. XV. 20. and *David* saith *many are the afflictions of the Righteous.* Ps. XXXIV. 19. They were frequent under the Law as well as before it, and the Gospel does expressly promise them, *Mark. i. 30.* By it we are appointed unto afflictions, and it hath declared that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God. *Thef. III. 3. Act. XIV. 22.*



Thus the Days of Mans Life here are days of Vexation and Misery. The Reason is, because all men are Sinners before God, none of their Ways are pure in his Sight. Sin kindles his Wrath, both his Love and Justice prompt him to the Chastisement of them who do amiss, nor can his Holiness forbear to shew its Displeasure at Evil Actions. Therefore God wisely useth the rod of Affliction upon all, to punish the Sins which they commit, and to keep them from falling into more. Nor is it the least Trouble of some that every where there are Snares and Tents to Sin, and little Strength or Courage or Resolution to resist them; that we carry *a body of sin* which hinders the running vigorously the Race that is set before us; and that there is still *a Law in our Members warring against the Law of our Mind*, so that when they would do Good, Evil is present with them. This is most to be lamented, for it is the Source of all present Sorrow, and after Unhappiness.

V. Finally in *numbring our days*, we should consider the End of them, how that they are succeeded by an Eternal State of Felicity or Misery according to  
our

our Behaviour here. He is an ill Accountant who knows not the value of the Sum he casts up: and he numbers his Days to little purpose, who understands not neither considers the Eternal Consequence of them. If nothing was to follow Death, there would be little reason to number our Days or take Thought for Life, the more Insensible of it we would be the Easier. But Heaven or Hell, Eternal Happiness or Misery coming after this Life, therefore it is of the highest Importance, and there is all Obligation to lay it seriously to Heart, and to consider how it should be Employed. These Days of Life tho few are of great Value, nay of Infinite Value, because they give Opportunity of gaining and making sure Everlasting Life. And if this Opportunity be lost, not only Eternal Happiness is lost, but there must be a suffering and undergoing of Eternal Pain and Misery. They who lose the Markets of this World, only lose the Profits of them, but they who lose the Time of this Life, are not only deprived of the Good which they might have had, but likewise Eternally punished.

For Death is no Annihilation: It looses

the Union of the principal parts of which Man is composed, it dissolves for a time the Material Frame; but it does no hurt to the Soul which is Spiritual and Immortal. The Souls of all survive Death or the Dissolution of the Body, and are instantly disposed according as they are Qualified. And after some Time, both Soul and Body rise again first to be Judged, and then to receive the final Rewards according to that which they have done in the Body, whether Good or Evil: they that have done well are made equal to Angels, and carried to the Presence of God, where there is *fulness of joy and rivers of pleasure for ever more*, and others, are *turned into Hell* where there is perpetual *Weeping Wailing and Gnashing of teeth*. This is the Doctrine of the Gospel, and as it is of the highest Importance, so its Evidence and Certainty bears proportion to the Importance of it.

This Consideration gives a quite other view of Humane Life, than can be had by any of the former alone. This changes the face of Things, and does in a manner alter their Nature. This clears what was obscure, and renders beautiful what seemed



seemed ugly. Without this no just Aim can be made, no right Measures taken, no true Judgement of things formed. This determines our great Business, and shews the Folly of taking thought for this Life, *what we shall eat or what we shall drink or wherewith we shall be clothed*; It declares the Vanity of being disquieted with the Cares of *heaping up riches*, and of *laying up treasures on Earth*. It makes the burden of Afflictions light, and convinceth that all the Evils of this Present Life are no more to be regarded, than the Inconveniencies of travelling a few days towards ones own Home, where good Welcome is certain, and where Ease, Plenty and all desireable Things abound. And as a short Journey is always best, so on this account a short Life is no Unhappiness: but therefore also there is all Reason to employ it well; for it is our Day in which we should work, when the Night comes no Man can work. Hereafter there can be no labouring for Eternal Life, nor any Opportunity of repairing what was amiss here. Then Time cannot be redeemed or recovered, for Death is an End of Time. Then as one Angel saith, *there shall*

*shall be Time no longer. And then also is fulfilled what was spoken by another, He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. As the Tree falls so it must ly, and as a Man dies so his Condition is determined to all Eternity.*

According to the Sentiment of some, the Penman of this Psalm dreamed not of this Matter; Moses and the Patriarchs were ignorant of an *After State*: and under the Law there was neither Promise nor Expectation of Eternal Rewards. The Jews, say they, learned this after they were carried Captive to Babylon, and so most probably the Notion of an other Life was taken up from the Heathens, and hence it is that after the Babylonish Captivity, it is often plainly intimated but never before.

Suppose all this was true, it cannot shake the Evidence of an other Life given by the Gospel: yet the Opinion is promoted for this End, and some are so weak as to be caught by it to divert the Obligation to mind that other after Interest.

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This Opinion proceeds from a Tribe usually very confident, but generally Strangers to true Learning and Right Reasoning. They affect Notions that are singular and out of the common Road, and so are more ready to take up with Prejudices against the Truth, than with the Truth it self, let it be never so legibly written: nor do they seem to read and study for other End than to maintain these unreasonable Prejudices, for they are pleased with any Shadow of appearance, and put every thing to the Rack and Torture to make it speak as they would have it. Indeed there is one who gives too much Countenance to this Opinion, that has deservedly a Name in the Republick of Letters: but Great Men are not always free of Failings, nor Wise Men of Impertinences, nor Learned Men of gross Mistakes. An Opinion is not the Truer or more Probable, that one or two Learned Persons seem to favour it. And as for This, let it be impartially considered and t'will be found most Absurd, very unbecoming Persons of Study and Contemplation, who should understand the Meaning and Emphasis of Words and Things, and who should be capable to reach

*Gros. in  
II. Mac.  
XII. &  
alibi.*



reach the necessary Consequences of them. Nay this Opinion ought to be detested with Indignation, because it makes St. Paul a Lyar who has asserted the contrary. Heb. XI. nor does make our Saviour himself to speak Truth, when he refuted the *Sadducees* from the Writings of Moses.

But setting aside the clear Decision of Christ and his Apostles, where is the Human Probability for this Opinion that the Jews were Ignorant of a Future State, or that they received the Knowledge of it from the Gentiles? Is it likely that they who walk'd in Darkness should know the Designs of God and what was to come, better than they who lived in the Midst of Revelations? or could men reason better without the help of Revelation than by it? That the Heathens every where, especially the Wise and Thinking Men among them, had some Notions of another Life and even of a Resurrection cannot be denied. But whence had they them by Reason or Tradition? if by Tradition from the first and Common Parents of Mankind, as Grotius and others assert, This was common to the Jews, and better preserv'd among them; they knew the Divine Original of it, and so they

*Vid. Grot.  
Ver. Rel. L.  
I. XXII. &  
IV. XII.  
Annot.*

they must have had a greater Respect for it, as t'was like therefore to make a deeper Impression upon them. Whereas tho the Tradition it self was kept among the Heathen, yet they forgot the Authority of it, and consequently their Regard to it was less. Hence it is, that they never spoke of it with any full Assurance, nor with any deep Perswasion of its Certainty, but only as a Matter highly Probable and agreeable to the Goodness of God, as t'was in it self desireable. If Reason suggested the Hope of another Life, why should it be thought that the Jews had it not? They had the Reasonable Faculties of other men, and these Faculties as much improv'd by the Cultivation of Arts and Sciences, as has been lately illustrated very Ingeniously. And suppose the Vulgar of the Jewish Nation, as generally every where, deserved all those Reproaches of Rudeness, Ignorance, and Stupidity, which One casts upon them for justifying his Blasphemies against Moses and his Sacred History, I say, suppose this; yet Abraham and the Patriarchs, Moses and the Prophets were Men of as great Capacity, of as profound Judgement, as Contemplative, and as much skilled in

Dickinson  
Physica  
Vetus &  
Vera.

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Universal Nature as any Philosopher on Record. Nay it may be proved easily that they excelled the best of other Nations, in Natural Knowledge as well as Moral Wisdom. Indeed they did not entertain Disputes about the Imaginary Elements and Principles of Natural Bodies, nor did they form Chimerical Schemes how Things might have been at first produc'd by Matter and Motion, the Laws of Mechanism and such like Measures, which passes only for Philosophy with some, tho very undeservedly, for a Man is never the Wiser for it: But it is evident that they studied all the Works of God, that they observ'd accurately the present Procedure of Nature, and did apply themselves to find out the Frame, the Contrivance, the Parts and Properties, the Virtues, Ends and Uses of every Thing; which is true solid Knowledge and the cheif part of Natural Philosophy. Moreover it is said of Moses, *that he was Learned in all the Wisdom of the Egyptians*, nor can we think otherwise of him when we remember his Education.

Now shall it be said that Men who had all the Advantages of others and even many beyond them, had yet never a Thought be-



beyond the Grave? neither once consider'd what would become of them when Dead, nor yet aspir'd after any Happiness above this Life, which by Experience they found so much Allayed and so often Interrupted! Indeed there are divers Instances of Learned and Knowing Persons who care little for these Matters of another World: but it is because they have not that Sense of God which the Patriarchs and Prophets had, nor their Piety and Devotion. Can we fancy that those who entertained Angels, and convers'd with God himself, who saw his Glory and tasted how Good He is, I say, can we fancy that they had no Wishes to be always with God, neither did once ask if t'was possible? can we think that such Wise Men concluded that God made all Men in vain? or that he was least kind to Man, to the Creature made after his own Image? is it possible that they who were honoured to be the Friends of God, to speak to him face to face, to be entrusted with his Eternal Purposes, I say, is it at all probable that nothing of a Resurrection and Future Life should be imparted to them, and so that they should be left destitute of the chiefest Comfort

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of the Soul , while they were receiving other Singular Tokens of Gods Love? To think so would be injurious to the Memory of these Great Persons , and t<sup>h</sup> would also be injurious to the Love of God. Wherefore certainly they looked to the other side of the Grave, and did as often as they numbred their Days consider the Eternal Consequence of them.

There were Sadducees among the Jews, and so there are Scepticks and Infidels among Christians; is therefore the Truth of the Gospel obscure? do not some begin to revive Heresies which once troubled the Church of Corinth, and which St. Paul as clearly refuted 1 Cor. XV. they place all our Heaven upon Earth, and confine the whole Joy and Felicity of a Christian to the Present Life, does therefore the Gospel give no Evidence for a Resurrection and Eternal Life ! if the Unbelief of some is sufficient Reason for questioning the Truth and Evidence of any thing , then all Things are still in the Dark, and the Existence of a Deity it self must be made doubtful, tho it be as evident as any Proposition in the Mathematicks. What tho the Scribes and Pharisees were puzzled with a silly Objection?

tion? what tho they were not so clear  
 fought as to reach the full Meaning or  
 all the Consequence of these words,  
*I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and  
 Jacob?* Must therefore Moses have been  
 ignorant of the true Import of them?  
 there is no Reason to say so, and there-  
 fore no doubt Moses upon this and other  
 Accounts was perswaded that these Pa-  
 triarchs both Existed, and would Rise  
 again, because *God is a God of the Li-  
 ving and not of the Dead.* Eternal Life  
 was not expresly annexed to Moses his  
 Law, that People might not think to ob-  
 tain that Life by Obedience to a Law  
 which was only an Introduction to the  
 better Law that giveth it. But as before  
 Moses the Jews were trained up in the  
 Belief of another Life, so after him the  
 other Prophets did often Intimate it, and  
 refer to it. The perfect Discovery of  
 Eternal Life was purposely put off to  
 the Coming of Christ, because being the  
 Authour of it, He ought to have the  
 Honour of giving the clearest Revela-  
 tion about it. But so much both of the  
 Nature and Certainty of it was discove-  
 red before, as was sufficient to attract  
 the Hearts, to raise the Hopes, to bear



up the Spirits, to rejoice the Souls, and to animate the Endeavours of all who lived in those days.

And as under these former Dispensations, all the Wise and Serious looked to the different States of Felicity and Misery which are after this Life; so we are further obliged to this, because we have receiv'd a fuller and clearer Revelation about these Things to come. Now *Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel*, that is, the Revelation of the Gospel is Clear and Evident, and dispels all Doubts. Former Discoveries were dark in comparison, this is so much Brighter and so much more Convincing, as Noontide is above the Dawnings of the Morning. The Gospel is *a glorious Light* which shines with Power and Evidence, so that they are wilfully blind who do not see it, neither are convinced by it: It sheweth the Strength and Validity of former reasons for Life and Immortality, and also giveth new Demonstrations for the Truth of them. It both gives all assurance of an other Life to come; and also rectifies the mean and mistaken Notions which most had of it, by making the Nature of it as plain as  
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our present Faculties can conceive it. As it carries our Sight beyond this present Vifible World, so it shews there two States, both Permanent but vastly Different and at an Infinite Distance, so that there can be no Interchanging or passing from one to another; Every one that dies enters into the one or other, and which soever is entred, there one must abide to all Eternity. In the one there is all Joy and more Happiness than can be expressed, but in the other Extreme Misery and not one Drop of Comfort to allay it. In the one God manifests Infinite Love and Mercy by *good things, which as yet Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of Man*; In the other He executes his Severe Justice and sheweth the Power of his Wrath. They who are in the one are made Equal to Angels, they *see God as he is*, and become *like him*: In the other, there is no Company but that of the Devil and his Angels, and of such as are Damned and Reprobated for ever; Persons who will not be consulting the Ease of one another, but who will study to add to one anothers Torment. The one is set before us under the Figures

*of Paradise, the Tree of Life, Crowns and Scepters, a Marriage-feast, and a State which has no need of the Sun or Moon or Stars, tho these be the Beauty and Comfort and Glory of this World: the Figures of the other, are a Bottomless Pit, utter Darknes, a Lake of Fire and Brimstone, a Worm that never dieth and a Fire that never goeth out, perpetual Weeping, Wailing and Gnashing of teeth.* In a word we are told that the one is full of all Horrour, as the other is the perfection of Joy, Delight and Bliss. This is the Conclusion of Humane Life, and the Ultimate End of it; these Things we are to expect according to the Gospel. If it shall be otherwise, the Gospel is a Fable, the Apostles were false witnesses, *our preaching is vain, and Your faith is vain*; neither is Christ risen from the dead. But to deny that Christ is risen, is wicked Impudence after so many clear and convincing Proofs of it. It has been declared by faithfull Witnesses, and confirmed by Prophecies, Miracles, Signs and Wonders from Heaven. Christ therefore is risen, and therefore also there shall be a Resurrection from the Dead, and a Solemn Judgment for bestowing Heaven



Heaven or Hell upon Men according as they have used and managed this Present Life. There is all reason to recommend the Practice of Piety and Religion by the present Contentment and Satisfaction which it gives to the Spirit: but there are other and greater Rewards set before us, which we should have an Eye to, for the Hope of them is our chief Joy and our chief Support under the former Melancholy Considerations of this Life. Whatever specious Figures they put on, who draw the Heaven of the Gospel to Earth, neither raise the Promises above the present Life, they are but Atheists and Infidels in masquerade, endeavouring to destroy the sure Foundation of Religion, while they pretend to advance the Excellency of it. *If in this Life onely we have hope in Christ, we are of all Men most Miserable.* The Serm. VIII. Truth and force of these Words I have 1697. shewed elsewhere.

Thus I have laid before you how *our days* should be *numbred*, and what the *numbring* them implies. To Number them is necessary, and of great Importance: nor is there any great difficulty in doing it. It requires no great Capacity,

city, nor extraordinary Parts, nor great Reading, nor an expensive Education: whosoever has any measure of Common Sense is able to cast up this Account. This Divine Arithmetick is soon learned, but alas! it is not commonly practis'd. All are capable of it, and it is the Interest of all to do it, but nothing is more neglected. As in regard of the Civil Life, there are some Busy Bodies always meddling in other mens matters and careless of their own, they go up and down from morning to night observing other People, and chatting what they hear and see of them, but never think on their own Concerns which therefore go to Ruin. So most of the World with respect to their Spiritual and Eternal Interest, are constantly abroad and taken up with things without them and which least concern them, and so commonly die Ignorant of themselves. They are quick at balancing Sums and reckoning the value of Money, witty enough to learn the World and the things of the World; they can prate upon the History of the past Times and the Transactions of the present, they seem to be able to tell every thing: But behold they know  
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not the number of their Days , neither are sensible of the Importance of them, which is the most usefull thing, far better than all other Knowledge. What Satisfaction can it be to know other mens Riches , if our selves be poor and miserable? and what signifies it to be Skilled and knowing in all other matters, if we know not our Selves! which we can never do unless we be able to *number our days*, yea actually do it.

Wherefore it very much concerns us to learn to number our Days , but as it is now commonly neglected , so t'was of old. Mankind in all Generations are much the same , troubled about many things, and careless of the one thing necessary. Sense, Reason and Understanding are given us , but they are seldom employed aright , to the Purposes for which they were chiefly intended. Nothing so easy, nothing so necessary as to number our Days, and yet nothing commonly less minded. This made Moses break out into that patheticall Wish , *O that they were wise! o that they understood this! o that they would consider their latter end!* And here you see that he makes a solemn Address to God to



interpose his Grace for obliging People to the serious Consideration of their Days. Natural Faculties for this Exercise are not wanting, but such is the Corruption of Humane Nature that Natural Faculties are not now sufficient without the Divine Assistance, which as we are taught here should be implored even in the plainest, clearest and most common things. Our Memories are good enough on other occasions, but they often fail us in this Matter, which made David pray. *Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am.* Ps. XXXIX.

4. Davids Understanding was good, but he found by Experience that men are apt to forget, and therefore that it is needfull to remember the best to consider even that which every Day lays before them.

## SECOND PART.

Having shewed how to *number our days* and what it implies, it follows next to give the Reason and End for doing it, for instructing the right Use of it, without which the Number and Knowledge

ledge of our Days might please a curious Fancy, but would not be profitable.

Some will be ready to say, what need of numbring our Days! why should such a Melancholy and unpleasant Task be undertaken? Sorrow is vexatious enough of it self and why should one encrease it by continual Ruminati<sup>o</sup>n! were it not better to divert the Thoughts of it? So the most do, as men when their Affairs are in Disorder, when they are dipt into Difficulties, they care not to look into their Books or to cast up their Accounts, they run into Company and Tippling and do all they can to turn away their Thoughts from their uneasy Condition and Circumstances: But what gain they by this Method! only greater shame and more certain Ruin without any present Satisfaction. So our Life will not be Sweeter by forbearing to number the Days of it; nor shall our Case be better but far worse if we neglect to consider our present State and Circumstances, or the Eternal Consequences of them. Evils will neither keep off altogether nor be the longer a coming that we think not on them: but they will be the more grievous as we are less prepared to receive them.

them. When a Sore or Distemper seizes us, we presently consult whether it be curable, nor do we neglect it tho' it be declared incurable. We advise further how to alleviate the pain and trouble of it, and what is to be done to enable us to bear it out to the last. So seeing Life is not in our Power, seeing we can neither prolong it, nor prevent the Inconveniencies that accompany it, nor alter the Important Consequences of it, it becomes us, it is our Interest to study what should be done in this State, what Measures to be taken for making the best of that which is unavoidable, and for securing to our selves Peace and Happiness, present and future, as much as is possible. Wherefore the Psalmist, as he prays to be taught to *number our days*, so for this End and Reason, *that we may apply our hearts unto Wisdom.*

*Vid. Vieters  
Decupla.*

Some render it, *that we may get a wise heart, or a heart of Wisdom, or bring Wisdom into the heart.* The Hebrew will bear all, as all these renderings are to the purpose. Some of the Jewish Doctors paraphrase it, *that we may be as a prophet who knows the truth and is wise in heart.* So then Moses asks the Art of  
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numbring our Days in order to Wisdom. From which Four Particulars may be observed, which give Important Instructions for regulating our Days, and managing aright our short frail Life.

I. Wisdom is a great and necessary support to Humane Life. For when Moses had in his view all the Evils and Miseries of this Life, with the important Consequences thereof, He seriously addresses God for Wisdom as a proper Remedy to these Evils, and as that which would turn our Life to a good Account. No Wisdom can change the Nature and Quality of our Days, nor alter the Consequences of this present Life: but true Wisdom directeth to the right and true Use of Life, and does teach us to manage our Days with such advantage as may abate our Sorrow for the present Evils of Life and quicken our Hopes of future Comfort. The generality of the World look upon Wealth, Riches, Honours and worldly Power to be the great Props of Life: therefore their Hearts are set upon these only, they seek them by all Means and Methods, *per fas & nefas*, lawfull and unlawfull, if they be got, no matter how. But every days Experience shews  
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the Weakness of this support, and the delusion of those who trust to it. *Mans Life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* Luc. XII. 15. A Man neither liveth the longer nor is the happier that his Fortune is great. A Mans Life is not prolonged according as he hath to spend, nor does his Contentment encrease with his Estate. A Little is sometimes better than great Riches, and let a Man have never so much of Honour and Riches, *when he dieth he carrieth nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him.* By Power, Honour and Riches one is enabled to make a Figure in this World but there is no Regard to them in the other that follows. Neither Riches nor Honour nor any of these outward things, can give either inward Peace at present, or secure future Bliss. *Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.* Both the Life and Death of such a Person differ not much from Beasts except that the End of the Man is sadder. But Wisdom and Understanding make a great difference, they keep up the Dignity of Man in this World, they make his End Happy.

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Hence it is that there are so many Precepts for Wisdom, so many Exhortations to it, and so many noble Encomiums of it. *Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding. Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: for the merchandise of it is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than Rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. She is a tree of Life to them that lay hold on her, and happy is every one that retaineth her.* After this manner speaketh Solomon of Wisdom in his *Book of Proverbs*. And Job long before him saith to the same purpose, *It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the Gold of Ophir, with the precious Onyx or the Sapphir. The gold and the Crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for Jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of Coral or Pearles, for the price of Wisdom is above Rubies. The Topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure Gold.*



*Gold.* Job. XXVIII. 15. All these things are said to engage us to *apply our hearts unto Wisdom* as the chief Support and only Comfort of Humane Life. This should be our first and continued Aim, all other things ought only to be regarded by the by: for we may make our Life easy and happy when other things are wanting, but without Wisdom there is no Comfort. For this cause we should *cry after Wisdom, and lift up our voice for understanding, we should seek for her as for silver, and search for her as for hid treasures.* As Solomon advises Prov. II. 3, 4.

II. Knowledge and Speculation alone are not true Wisdom. It is plain here that the Psalmist distinguishes them; for first he prays for the Knowledge of our Days or Life, and then that the Heart may apply it self to Wisdom, which clearly shews that Wisdom is something more than Knowledge. Speculation and Knowledge must go before Wisdom and are necessary to it, but they are not the whole of Wisdom. There is no Wisdom without Knowledge but Knowledge may be and often is without Wisdom, but never profitable without it. A  
Ground

Ground may be rich, but the Owner can have no Profit until it be cultivated; nor is the greatest Knowledge of any advantage to him that hath it unless improv'd to Wisdom. Knowledge and Speculation are the Materials, and Wisdom is the Art of extracting the Good of them. Wisdom is the Use of Knowledge, and draweth Speculation into Practice. Wisdom is the acting suitably to that which one knows and sees, but Folly never considers: Wherefore Solomon describing a *prudent Man*, and giving the difference betwixt him and *the simple* or Fool, saith that the first *foreseeth the evil and hideth himself*, whereas the other *passeth on and is punished*. Prov. XXII. 3. that is, He that taketh proper Measures is Prudent, but he that never alters his Course whatever be laid before him is a Fool. It is as if one should have a Light or Candle in his hand, and yet never regard it to the guiding his steps. The same Solomon saith, that *Wisdom is profitable to direct*. So that if the Actions be not suitably directed and adjusted, Wisdom is wanting, tho there may be great Natural Parts, good Wit, quick Fancy, much Learning and Reading: for these

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alone make not one Wise, but only the good and proper Use of them. Therefore the *common proverb* is just, that *some have good wits if wise men had the keeping of them*: which may be applied to Knowledge, Learning, and all Natural Parts. The measure of these Gifts which some have, would be very usefull to Wise Men: but many who have them are Fools, with regard both to Common Sense and the great End of Mans Life. He only is a Wise Man who is suitably affected with his Knowledge, who considers well and lays to Heart that which is made known to him, who weighs the Importance of things, and applies himself seriously to the accurate Observation of all that is recommended by the Nature and Consequence of them.

Hence it is, that according to the constant tenor of both Doctrine and Expression in Scripture, the Heart is made the Seat of Wisdom, as in the present Text. In the common Language of the World, and even of Natural Philosophers, Wisdom lyeth in the Head or Brain; but the Scripture always placeth it in the Heart: and so the Sacred Phrase is a *wise heart*, an *understanding heart*, a  
heart



*heart to perceive, and men of heart, are men of understanding, wise men, as it is Job. XXXIV. 10, 34. Likewise to lack a heart and to lack understanding is all one in the Hebrew, as Solomon saith of him that committeth adultery with a woman. Prov. VI. 32. for you have one in the Text, the other in the margine, as the one is the sense and the other the letter of the Original.*

After this manner does the Scripture speak, to shew the necessity of having the Heart deeply affected by serious Consideration for making one Wise. This Way of speaking is just and proper, and it seems to be founded on our Natural Frame and Constitution, as appears by *Dr. Willis de Cerebro p. 65. 265.* the observation of a late Eminent and learned Physician, who shews that there is a strict Intercourse between the Brain and Heart by the means of *a plexus of Nerves* peculiar to Man and even to Wise Men; for as he found by some dissections they are neither in Brutes nor Idiots: Some resemblance there is in Monkeys which makes them more capable than other Beasts to imitate Humane Actions. By means of these *Nerves* all Impressions on the Brain are instantly

communicated to the Heart for affecting it and for producing suitable Passions, which also serve reciprocally to retain, confirm, encrease and make deeper these Impressions on the Brain, by the Repercussion of the Blood and Animal Spirits. When there is such an exact Correspondence between the Brain and Heart, when the Heart has communicated to it those Impressions on the Brain by the several Senses, and does answer them by proper Motions, than the Natural Frame of the Body is right, there is then a due Order in the Body which is its wise Contrivance. So the Wisdom of the Soul consists in being suitably affected with all that it sees, hears or otherwise receives: For without this, the most Knowing and capable Head can no more be called Wise than a Glass, which also both receives and reflects all the Images of visible Objects cast upon it; as the other like it, is not sensible of the Importance of any of them or of the difference betwixt them. What is one either the wiser or better by all he knows if he proceed no further? what signifies Speculation if no Fruit be produced? one had as good be without Knowledge as

to rest in it and go no further. Nay it is much better, for Ignorance may plead some excuse, but no excuse can be admitted where there is Knowledge. He that knows and does not, as he is a Fool, so he deserves double stripes. The Knowledge of our Days or State of Life is desirable and necessary, but cannot be profitable except we thereby get *wise hearts*, that is, except our Hearts be duely affected, and moved to take proper and requisite Measures. What our Saviour said on a particular occasion, is a general Maxim, *if ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them.*

III. The Fear of God is Mans true Wisdom. By Fear, I do not mean the Fear of Dread, which by it self begets an abhorrence, and so the Apostle calls it *the spirit of bondage*: but I understand the Fear of Reverence which is very far from being uneasy, and which is a holy Regard of God obliging to all Religious Worship and Obedience. Commonly in Scripture, all Piety and Religion goes under the name of *the Fear of God*, because they are the effects of it and do proceed from it. Faith and Obedience are included in Fear, for he can have



no true Fear of God who doubts what he says, distrusts what he promises, or who refuses to do what he commands. There is no true Fear of God, if He be not universally acknowledg'd, and sincerely complied with in every thing which He has declared to be his Holy Will and Pleasure.

As this is the Fear of God, so it is true Wisdom. No other Wisdom deserves these high Praises given before, nor do those gracious Fruits spring from any other. Something both of Pleasure and Profit follow all Arts and Sciences; the Contemplation of Nature and natural things, whether Celestial or Terrestrial is delightful as it is true Philosophy, there is a Wisdom proper to every Trade and kind of Life, which is to be studied by such as are interess'd in them; but the chief Wisdom, that which excels all other, and that which all are concern'd to learn for directing how to manage Life and how to improve it to Eternal Advantage, I say this and only this is the Fear of God.

It was this which Moses meant in the Text, as is clear by its Connexion with the preceeding Verse. There it is, *who knoweth the power of thine anger!* even  
 accor-

according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. The first Clause is plain, intimating that Gods Anger is most dreadful, and that the Weight and effects of it are above what can be either expressed or apprehended. The last Clause seems a little obscure, because after the Hebrew way of Divine Poesy it is short and abrupt. The Letter of the Original is simply *thy wrath as thy fear*. For finding the sense of which, *who knoweth*, in the beginning of the verse must be referred to this as well as the other Clause, and then the Meaning is clear, *who knoweth or who considereth thy wrath as thy fear teacheth, or as thou oughtest to be feared?* and so the Paraphrase of the Chaldee is, *who* <sup>Apud Ainsworth.</sup> *knoweth to turn away the strength of thine anger, but the Just who fear thee appeasing thy wrath.* The Question *who knoweth* is an Intimation that few or none did it, and therefore he prays to be taught to *number our Days*, so as to *apply the heart to Wisdom*, that is, to consider, how full our Days are of the effects of Gods Wrath, that they might learn the Wisdom of his Fear. Moses was *learned in all the Wisdom of the Egyptians*, yet he preferred the Fear of God, and did ac-

count it the chief Wisdom, as he told the People. Deut. IV. 5. *Behold, saith he, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me. Keep therefore and do them, for this is your Wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.*

Nor is this Manner of speaking peculiar to Moses, it is the common strain of Scripture: *the Fear of the Lord, saith the Psalmist, is the beginning of Wisdom, a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.* Ps. CXL. 10. Solomon says it often, as Prov. I. 7. IX. 10. and Jesus the Son of Sirach enlarges on it. Eccclus. I. Job declares the same, and the manner how he does it is very remarkable, as you have it Ch. XXVIII. There he setteth forth God appointing every thing its proper Place, and fixing Laws and Ordinances suitable to their several Natures and answerable to the Ends of their Creation, *laying a vein for silver and a place for gold, mixing Iron with earth and brass among stones, cutting out rivers among the rocks, and binding the floods from*



from overflowing, making the weight for the winds and weighing the waters by measure, giving a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of thunder. When God had thus fixed every thing and declared the Laws of Universal Nature, He turned unto man and said, *behold the fear of the Lord that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil that is understanding.* That is, this was the Statute and Decree given to Man, which like the Ordinances of the Heavens and the Natural Course of all things, is not only unalterable but wisely contrived, being just, reasonable and proper, and as much for the Interest of Man, as these Laws and Measures prescribed to other things are necessary to the Ends and Uses for which they were created. And it is upon this Consideration, that Solomon saith *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, viz: of all wise and serious Enquiries, fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man.* So it is in the Original. Eccles. XII. 13. and the Meaning is, it is his whole Interest as well as Duty, it is his great Concernment, and should be his chief Aim and Study, it is his only way to Peace and

Happiness, and consequently his greatest Wisdom.

For by the true Fear of God, Sin is curbed and partly cured, which is the only Cause of Sorrow, the Wrath of God is turned away, which is only to be dreaded; and his Favour is procured, which is the only Source of Comfort. The Fear of God is a Bridle to our unruly Passions, it rectifies the Disorders of our Nature, and gives Peace of Conscience, which is Solomons *merry heart and a continual feast*. By fearing God and keeping his Commandments, Eternal Misery is prevented, Eternal Happiness is secured, and the Evils of this Life are changed into gentle Afflictions, which prepare the way for an Eternal Weight of Glory. By the Fear of God our few Days are multiplied, and our short Life is made equal to the Longest, by being equally effectual to advance us to *the fulness of the stature of perfect Men*. For as the Author of *Ecclesiasticus* saith, *there is no Inquisition in the grave, whether thou have lived ten, or an hundred or a thousand Years*. Ch. XLI. 4. The Question there is whether one has feared God and kept his Commandments, what

what measure of Faith has been acquired, and how many good Works done. The Growth and Perfection of Men are not measured by Years, but by the degrees of Grace, Knowledge and true Piety, which may be acquired in few Days as well as many, especially now by the Help and Light of the Gospel. If you have lived fast, not in the sense of Sensual and Brutish Epicures, but by great Pains and extraordinary Diligence to be a forward Proficient in Divine Wisdom, you are old in a Spiritual Sense, and fully ripe to be admitted into the Society of *the spirits of just men made perfect*. Then whatever be the Number of thy Years, *thine age shall be clearer than the noon day, thou shalt shine forth and be as the morning*. As it is Job. XI. 17. And so because under the Dispensation of the Gospel, the Attainment of this Divine Wisdom is so much easier than in former times, therefore it is said *there shall be no more thence an Infant of days, nor an old Man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred Years old, but the sinner being an hundred Years old shall be accursed*. II. LXV. 20. That is, a Child may be perfect as if he  
had



had lived to the Age of an hundred, but he who continues a Sinner, tho he live a hundred Years, shall be reprobated as a misgown and dwarfish Person, unfit for Use. Finally as Religion and the Fear of God compensate the shortness of Life, and sweeten the bitterness of it, so it makes one run no hazard by the sudden or abrupt Conclusion of it. For he that walks by the Principles of Piety and Religion, is among the wise Virgins who furnish their Lamps with oil before hand, and have it not to seek when there is present occasion for it. He is always ready to depart this Life, no sudden Call can be a great Surprise, neither put him in a pitiful Hurry or Confusion. True Preparation for Death is not to be transacted in an hour or two; a few Serious Thoughts when just a dying will hardly determine ones Eternal State to the better side, unless the preceeding Life has been suitable. Wherefore the care of a wise Man should not be after some particular forewarning of the Moment of Death, but so to order his Life and Conversation that he can be at no loss whether Death come sooner or later, whether it makes deliberate and visible Approaches

proaches or seizes him suddenly. Now he that walks in the Fear of God is that wise and faithful Servant, who is always about his Lords Will, and so whatever time the Lord come, He will find him a doing it. The Lord may come when he is not actually looking for him, but this can occasion no Disorder or Confusion; it shall be as the unexpected Meeting of a Dear and well-beloved Lord with a faithful well-esteemed Servant; even the encrease of Joy, and so much the greater because sooner than was hoped.

Thus it evidently appears that the Fear of God is true Wisdom, nay the only Wisdom with respect to Humane Life considered in its whole State, its present Circumstances and future Consequences.

And this will further appear by a View of Impiety and Profaneness, which are not more wicked than foolish in all respects, and that is the Reason why in Scripture *Sin* is called *Folly*, as an Ungodly Person goes by the character of a *Fool*. For Impiety and Profaneness provoke God, whose Wrath is able to sweep away every thing in a Moment;  
and

and by these one is obnoxious to all the Miseries of the Life that now is, as of that which is to come. God is a declared Enemy to Wicked persons, and consequently they can have no true Peace with any of his Creatures, their Possession of them is usurped as the Enjoyment is cursed. An Ungodly or Wicked person can have no shadow of Rest or Peace, but when he shuts his Eyes and will neither look upon God, himself, the present State of things, nor that which succeeds according to the rules of Reason and the Revelation of Religion: for the least thought and mention of any of these, fills him with Horrour, causes the Heart to ake, and the Joints to tremble, as we read of Felix when St. Paul preached before him. The pleasure of an Ungodly Man is brutish, and often interrupted; his Life also as other mens is in Jeopardy every day, and there is nothing but the short and brittle Thread of Life betwixt him and Eternal Misery and Torment. O how dismal and horrid is the prospect of their State who have no Fear of God before their eyes! Therefore they are Fools, and therefore also the only Wise men of the World are they  
who



who fear God and keep his Commandments.

IV. A serious Consideration of the State and Condition of Humane Life is necessary to excite us to the Fear of God. For the Psalmist prays to be taught to *number our Days*, that we might *apply our hearts to wisdom*. And so he insinuates that the one not only makes the other necessary, but also does oblige and excite to it. The same may be gathered from his Wish in his last Song. *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end*. Folly and Wickedness are the effects of Ignorance and Inconsideration; *they know not*, saith the Psalmist, *neither will they understand or consider, therefore they walk on in darkness*. Ps. LXXXII. 5. But all Wisdom, and in particular that of the Fear of God is acquired by Consideration. How could the obligations to Piety and Religion be denied or resisted, if a future State, a Judgement to come with suitable Rewards and Punishments, were seriously remembered. If the shortness of Life, the Dangers and Difficulties of it, and the many Tentations which abound in it were carefully

fully laid to Heart, how could the Necessity of *working out our Salvation with fear and trembling* be so much shifted? Who would dare to procrastinate and delay their Repentance and Conversion, if the common sudden End of Life was considered? if the Vanity and Misery of this Life were thought on, how would it cure the inordinate Love of it, which besets so many and is the cause that they seek not the Kingdom of God first? Certainly the Reason why men forget God so much, is because they are Ignorant of themselves; they do not set themselves to fear, serve and obey Him, because they are not sensible of their own State and Condition: They do not Number their Days, and therefore are so ready to squander them away, as if they had the Years of Methuselah; they think not on the Dust to which they are to return, and therefore are so Proud and High-minded, so Insolent towards God and one another: they refrain not from Evil, because they fear not, neither have any apprehensions of Gods Wrath and Anger. But if they did often and seriously consider the State and Condition of this Life, with the Eternal Consequences of it,

it, and their Dependance on God, from whom alone all Good cometh, I say if these things were duely considered, they would be perswaded to curb their Extravagancies, to bridle their Sinful Inclinations, to husband Time as a most precious thing, and to walk before God *circumspectly not as fools but as wise.*

Wherefore as we know what it is to *number our Days*, so let us remember to do it; and as we do it, let us *apply our hearts to Wisdom.* Because we are apt to forget, let us refresh our Memories by the continual Memorandums of daylie Meditations; let us also carefully receive all these Remembrances, which Divine Providence sends us by its Conduct either towards our selves or others: for publick Calamities, the Death and Misfortune of others, and our own personal Distempers and Afflictions are so many Calls from God to consider the State of Humane Life, that by this means we may be stirred up to follow the things which make for our Peace.

Now that a New Year comes on, let us cast up the Account of the former, and see what has been mispent, and how far we are short of the End of Life, that

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we may make hast to redeem the Time lost, and by doubling our Diligence, may recover that which has been neglected. It is usual at this time to State and balance our Civil Affairs; but it is of more Importance to Consider how we have improv'd in Wisdom, how it stands with God and us, and whether there be more or less Ground to hope for Eternal Life. Reckon not how much thou hast to live by the Course of Nature, for so doing thou mayst reckon wrong. Every one does not live to fourscore, nor yet to threescore and ten, and many by Sixty and sooner out-live their Sense, Reason and Memory, and so are altogether unable for Business: Then they cannot mind the Affairs of this Life, and therefore are more unfit for those of another World. How feeble are Men when Old Age comes, whose Infirmities are most elegantly and pathetically described by *Solomon*? Eccles. XII. What Reason therefore is there to *remember the Creator in the days of youth*, while there is Strength and Vigour to serve Him, and so to make sure Everlasting Happiness! Thou sayest these Evil Days of Old Age are not near thee, and I say thou mayst never

never live to be Old or Grayheaded ; mayst thou not, as well as others be cut off in the Midst of thy days ? At present thou feelest thy self in perfect Health of Body and Mind, what then ? wilt thou therefore dare to lay aside the Fear of God, or to *walk in the ways of thine own heart, or the sight of thine Eyes ?* Remember what was said to the Fool in the Gospel, *this night thy soul shall be required of thee.* Should this be thy Case, Consider what would be thy Condition. What would you do if you knew that you were come to your last Hours ? It is Wisdom to do that Now, for this may be the last Time to many. *Today, while it is called to day, hear and harden not your hearts,* for to morrow God may swear that we *shall not enter into his Rest.* Wherefore to conclude, it is the Wisdom and Interest of all, presently and speedily to turn from the Evil of our Ways, and to repent of all past Sins; to *break of our sins by Righteousness and our Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the poor ;* to search the Scripture for that *faith without which it is impossible to please God,* and for those good works which are *the foundation of Eternal*

E 2                      Life,

*Sun. 1. after Epiph.* *Life, and to pray to God as our Church teacheth, that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**F I N I S.**



**E R R A T A.**

p. 23. l. 25. read Mark. X. p. 33. l. 23.  
r. probable. p. 34. l. 16. for as r. has.